

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 18-336 and CC Docket No. 92-105 regarding the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018.

Dear Madam Secretary,

United Way of Central Iowa appreciates the opportunity to comment on the current effort undertaken by the Federal Communications Commission to study the feasibility of designating a three-digit number to the National Suicide Hotline and to assess the effectiveness of the current National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. In central Iowa, our United Way is fighting for the health, education, financial stability and essential needs of our residents by investing in 2-1-1 and advocating for mental health reforms at the state and local levels.

We acknowledge efforts are needed to create a safe place for all people to call – especially underserved or marginalized populations such as seniors, people with physical or intellectual disabilities, people that identify as LGBTQ+, Veterans, American Natives, non-English speakers, and individuals facing complex problems such as substance/opioid use, human trafficking, and domestic violence. Our organization has over a 100-year history of helping the underserved, and today we partner with over 200 non-profits, businesses, education organizations and government agencies to drive system change to solve our community's toughest problems.

We encourage the FCC to consider our 2-1-1 work in Iowa as a vital partner in increasing access to suicide prevention and intervention services. United Way of Central Iowa invests in the success of 2-1-1 annually, and our statewide operations answer 78,709 requests for help each year. Moreover, each year our United Way invests more than \$20 million in mental health, substance use, health, education, and other financial stability services. These critical investments position us to be key partners in the success of an improved mental health and crisis response system.

Another three-digit code may erode the simplicity of a single point of access for community help. Despite concerted efforts by numerous social services, and multiple hotlines, in our community to educate and market the distinctions, a person in crisis will likely always reach for the most familiar or most accessible number. Our 2-1-1 receives calls that are better suited for 911, and our 911 partners often receive calls that we can best answer. We recommend that resources should be invested to improve a unified single point of access with a blended partnership of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and United Way's 2-1-1 services. We believe in the power of partnership to address gaps, not duplicate services, and will be a valuable partner in the fight against suicide.

You can learn more about our work at www.unitedwaydm.org or view live data from our 2-1-1 operations at <https://ia.211counts.org> can reach my office for additional questions or discussion at 515-246-6501. Thank you for your time in addressing this important issue and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Elisabeth Buck
President
United Way of Central Iowa